

20734

December 26, 1966

Dr. Robert H. Bahmer  
Archivist of the United States  
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Dr. Bahmer:

Since receipt of Dr. Rhoads' letter of November 25, 1966, reporting the refusal of Mr. Burke Marshall to allow me access to the X-rays and photographs of the autopsy of President Kennedy, I have received a number of reports of the pending examination of this evidence by those whose writings and speaking are not critical of the conclusions of the President's Commission. I have also been told that several members of the former Commission are to examine this evidence.

As you know, I believe this entire matter was illegally and improperly handled and consummated. I prefer not to contest it in court, but if there is no alternative, I am prepared to do so. I would hope that at even this late date the government would begin to correct its own error, otherwise scandal will follow scandal, without end.

Should defenders of the government's error be used to seek to validate the Report of the President's Commission by saying that they have seen these pictures and X-rays and the Report is right because the pictures show the wounds to be approximately where the autopsy doctors said they were, those not familiar with the entire burden of evidence may be persuaded that the Report has been substantiated. This, however, cannot be the case. Even if the government had the requisite chain of possession that alone can establish that these, indeed, are the genuine pictures and X-rays of the autopsy (as you acknowledge it does not), even if the autopsy doctors could authenticate these as the pictures they had taken, which they cannot, never having seen what they had taken, these pictures cannot address themselves to the basic questions of the assassination.

Members of the former Commission today have no standing I do not have. They are no longer government investigators. And they know less of the essential fact of the assassination than the public has been led to believe.

Either of these moves will be national calamity. Either will further besmirch the national honor.

Additionally, I raise the point that these pictures and X-rays are covered by the order of the acting Attorney General of October 31, 1966, for they were, in fact, considered by the Commission, as I am prepared to prove.

Dr. Bahmer - 2

I am making no demand for copies of this evidence. I am demanding the opportunity to examine it. I believe it is essential to the integrity of the government that one familiar with the evidence and in disagreement with the Report be given the opportunity of making this examination.

And I believe freedom of information requires no less.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg